

# May 2021

## East Central Iowa Council of Governments

[ecicog.org](http://ecicog.org)

### Newsletter

#### [PATCH Program Receives \\$1.1 Million in Donations](#)

In late 2020, the Housing Fund for Linn County (HFfLC) and ECICOG announced a program called Providing Assistance to Community Homeowners (PATCH), partnering with a number of area non-profits to help low to moderate income homeowners with repairs after the August derecho. In April, United Way of East Central Iowa (UWEI) the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation (GCRCF) more than quintupled the PATCH funding. \$1.17 million went to the PATCH program and \$280,000 went to an emergency relief program run by PATCH partner Matthew 25. Both awareness and application rates have also increased thanks to [this KCRG coverage](#). To date, ECICOG has approved 23 applicants and is working with an additional 26. HFfLC, ECICOG, Matthew 25, UWEIC, GCRCF, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, and the other PATCH partners are excited to continue offering support for those in our region still suffering effects of the derecho. Visit [our website](#) for more information or contact Housing Coordinator Nicole Wise at [nicole.wise@ecicog.org](mailto:nicole.wise@ecicog.org).

#### [ECICOG Helps Secure EDA Grant for Ed Tech Collaborative](#)

Last month, the Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD) received a grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) with grant-writing assistance from ECICOG. The \$393,000 grant will be used to promote the growth of Ed Tech companies in Iowa, manage an accelerator program for Ed Tech start-ups, and identify new market opportunities. With the presence of national companies such as ACT and a number of newer start-ups, the East Central Iowa region is in a unique position to capitalize on the heightened interest in online learning and other education technologies due to COVID-19. To learn more about economic development grant opportunities, contact Economic Development Specialist Adam Bentley at [adam.bentley@ecicog.org](mailto:adam.bentley@ecicog.org).

#### [Hydrostation Provides Real-Time Data to the Clear Creek Watershed Community](#)

The Clear Creek Watershed Coalition recently celebrated the installation of an Iowa Watershed Approach (IWA) hydrostation in the region. One of 20 statewide, the station measures rainfall, wind speed and direction, and soil moisture and temperature. This real-time data gives local farmers greater ability to plan their planting and field applications around changing weather conditions. Senator Ernst attended the event, praising the IWA and its conservation efforts throughout the state. ECICOG assisted local governments to form the Clear Creek Watershed Coalition, completed their watershed management plan last year, and provides grant administration for the Iowa Watershed Approach in the Clear Creek watershed. Read more about the hydrostation on [the IWA website](#) or contact Environmental Services Director Jennifer Fencl at [Jennifer.fencl@ecicog.org](mailto:Jennifer.fencl@ecicog.org) for more information on ECICOG's work with the region's watersheds.

## [ECICOG Provides Technical Support to Help Reconstruct Atkins Fire Station](#)

ECICOG can be a valuable resource when smaller communities find they lack the capacity or technical expertise to tackle important projects. That was the case for the City of Atkins as they began to contemplate the reconstruction of their fire station, which was irreparably damaged in the August 10, 2020 derecho. To assist with the effort, ECICOG staff worked with city leaders to develop a request for proposals for architectural services. ECICOG staff are currently facilitating the evaluation of those responses by local officials. Since the reconstruction effort may be partially eligible for funding through FEMA's disaster-related Public Assistance (PA) program, ECICOG staff are making sure that applicable federal grant requirements are being followed throughout the project. ECICOG is also helping the City apply for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds for related projects, such as a tornado-safe structure and warning siren. Contact Community Development Specialist Tom Gruis at [tom.gruis@ecicog.org](mailto:tom.gruis@ecicog.org) for more information about the technical support ECICOG can provide to communities.

## [Johnson County Receives Grant to Remove Three Flood-Prone Properties](#)

Johnson County was awarded grant funding to purchase three repetitive loss properties in partnership with Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management and FEMA through the Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program. These properties repeatedly suffer from flooding due to their location in the Iowa River floodway. By purchasing and removing them, Johnson County will prevent costly repairs and ease emergency evacuation and rescue requirements. ECICOG wrote the County's application and is administering the grant. From appraisal to removal, ECICOG will work with homeowners while managing services, contracts, proposals, and grant timelines. The project is expected to be completed by December 31, 2023.

For more information about ECICOG's work with flood property acquisition programs, contact Environmental Planner Alicia Presto at [Alicia.presto@ecicog.org](mailto:Alicia.presto@ecicog.org).

## [American Rescue Plan Presents Unique Opportunity for Cities](#)

On Monday May 10, the U.S. Department of Treasury released guidance on the [State and Local Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund \(Recovery Fund\)](#), as part of the [American Rescue Plan Act](#). Funds must be used by December 31, 2024 and only certain types of expenses are allowed. Cities are encouraged to visit the Iowa League of Cities' ARP resource page for links to the most recent information. ECICOG staff are available for facilitation or planning assistance as communities begin to contemplate the use of these funds. Contact Economic Development Specialist Adam Bentley at [adam.bentley@ecicog.org](mailto:adam.bentley@ecicog.org) for more information.

## **Funding Opportunities**

### [National Trust Preservation Funds Grant](#)

*Due June 1*

Grants from National Trust Preservation Funds (NTPF) are intended to encourage preservation at the local level by providing seed money for preservation projects. These grants help stimulate public discussion, enable local groups to gain required technical expertise, introduce the public to preservation concepts and techniques, and encourage financial participation by the private sector. Visit [the National Trust For Historic Preservation website](#) to find additional information.

## Iowa Living Roadway Trust Fund

*Due June 1*

Working through many partners in Iowa, the Living Roadway Trust Fund supports integrated roadside vegetation management and educates the public on the benefits, use, and care of roadside vegetation, including native plants. Counties and cities are eligible. Learn more about the application process at [the Iowa Living Roadway Trust Fund website](#).

## Solid Waste Alternative Program

*Due July 1*

The Solid Waste Alternative Program (SWAP) works to reduce the amount of solid waste generated and landfilled in Iowa. Financial assistance is available for a variety of project, including source reduction, recycling, and education. Visit [the Iowa Department of Natural Resources \(DNR\) website](#) for more information.

## Recreational Trails Programs

*State due July 1*

*Federal due October 1*

Both the state and federal trail programs provide funds for recreational trails and trail-related projects. The funding can be used for the acquisition, construction or improvement of recreational trails open for public use. At the time of this writing, the Iowa legislature has not officially approved funding for this program. Applications are being accepted with the presumption that it will be approved soon. Visit [the Iowa Department of Transportation \(DOT\) website](#) for more information.

## Community Development Block Program Water & Sewer Fund

*Applications reviewed quarterly with deadlines of*

*January 1, April 1, July 1, & October 1*

The program is funded through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The goal is to provide economic opportunities for people, especially those of low- and moderate income. Assists with the construction of water and sewer projects. Visit [the Iowa Economic Development Authority \(IEDA\) website](#) for more details on fund amounts and qualifications

## State Workforce Housing Tax Credit Program

*Due July 19*

This program provides tax benefits to developers to provide housing in Iowa communities. The priority will be for projects using abandoned, empty, or dilapidated properties or creating new housing in greenfield areas demonstrating a shortage of housing and in smaller cities. There is a total of \$25 million available, with \$15 million set aside for small cities. In our region, Benton, Iowa, Jones, and Washington Counties are eligible for the set-aside. Visit [the Iowa EDA website](#) for eligible project types and program requirements. Community Development & Housing Director Tracey Achenbach is available for questions at [tracey.achenbach@ecicog.org](mailto:tracey.achenbach@ecicog.org).